

OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

COSMETICALLY CHALLENGED

"Any man of your offspring throughout their generations in whom there be a blemish shall not come near to offer the food of G-d" (21:17)

The door of the restaurant swung open, letting in the sound and smell of Hollywood Boulevard. A short, dapper figure whose smile was fraying a little at the edges stood at the door. He looked around for a second and then started to pick his way through the restaurant; a couple of waiters, their trays held high, neatly pirouetted around him. Finding the booth I was sitting in, he slumped himself down on the opposite bench. He looked at me for a long second. I asked him "How did the audition go?" He smiled his worn smile and said "I just found out I'm too old for the parts I used to be too short for."

In Hollywood their is no dichotomy

between appearance and reality — appearance is reality. The way you look is everything.

Which is not to say that appearance is nothing. The Torah teaches us that in a dispute between a rich man and a poor man, the judge must take the rich man aside and tell him to either dress the poor man in clothes that are the equal of his own, or to put on poor man's clothes. Only then will he judge their case. The reason is that the judge may be influenced by the status of the rich man. On the one hand he may be impressed by his status and be biased to the rich man's version of the case. Alternatively, he may feel sorry for the poor man and judge in his favor.

What is puzzling about this law is that the judge already knows that the rich man is rich and the poor man is poor. Why isn't this just a charade to get them to dress up in different clothes? After all, the judge knows exactly who he's dealing with the whole time, doesn't he?

Seeing has a power which is unique to the senses. A smell may be more evocative, a sound may be more soothing, but nothing is as immediate as a sight. Seeing, as they say, is believing. And seeing can make you believe, even when you know that what you're seeing isn't true. In our own times, we know the tremendous hold that advertising has over us, even when we know that their entire agenda is to sell more soap. The visual sneaks beneath the fences of discernment and lodges itself in the subconscious.

With this idea, maybe we can understand a puzzling aspect of this week's Parsha. The Torah prohibits a *kohen* who has physical defects from performing the service of the *Beis Hamikdash*. These blemishes included a *kohen* who was blind, lame, whose nose had no bridge, who had one eye that was noticeably larger than the other, or who had one shin or thigh longer than the other; a *kohen* who was a hunchback, had abnor-

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

The *kohanim* are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They may attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: Father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. The *kohen gadol* (high priest) may not attend the funeral even of his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the *kohanim*. The nation is required to honor the *kohanim*. The physical defects that invalidate a *kohen* from serving in the Temple are listed. *Terumah*, a produce tithe given to the *kohanim*, may be eaten only by *kohanim* and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight days old and is free

from any physical defects. The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name of Hashem by insuring that their behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender their lives rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols. The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain types of creative work during these holidays. New grain may not be eaten until the *omer* of barley is offered in the Temple. The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the menorah and baking the *lechem hapanim* in the Temple. A man blasphemes Hashem and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

HAFTARAH: YECHEZKEL 44:15-31

This prophecy relates to the future Sanctuary and narrates many of the special laws of the priests and the sanctuary worship. This corresponds to the numerous priestly laws in this week's Parasha, Emor. The Haftarah begins with the statement that the priests will be from the seed of Tzadok, a righteous priest in the First Temple era who did not follow pagan worship like many others of his time. The prophet proceeds to mention the laws concerning the obligation to wear the priestly

vestments when performing the sanctuary tasks. The countenance of the priests should be exceptional and they should not be inebriated when entering the Temple. The Haftarah also states the special matrimonial laws, and the prohibition to become spiritually defiled by contact with the body of the deceased, unless he is a close relative. It ends with the certain gratuity they receive from sacrifices and offerings.

burning certain fats are the major obligation in all sacrifices.

The evil inclination is a combination of two types of passion, that of physical enjoyment and that of non-physical desires like honor and pride. Fat symbolizes the physical gain of gluttony and other materialistic pleasures, while blood represents the dynamic greed for glory and the endless pursuit of honor, which is often associated with bloodshed — the destruction of a fellow human. The idea of sacrifices is for us to connect our cerebral, abstract repentance with a physical action; we therefore offer up to G-d tangible entities corresponding to the two parts of our evil inclination we wish to overcome in order to refine ourselves and come closer to G-d.

BLOOD AND FAT

The parts of the sacrifices mentioned in the Haftarah as including the whole concept of sacrifice are blood and fat (ibid. 44:15). This is because sprinkling the blood on the corners of the altar and

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

“The son of the Israelite woman cursed Hashem...his mother's name was Shlomis bas Divri....”(24:11) The Midrash says: “Why was she called ‘bas Divri?’ Because she brought dever (disease) upon her son.” (Vayikrah Rabba 32)

The blasphemer was executed by stoning. Why, then, does the above Midrash say that his mother brought “dever” — disease — upon him?

One of the ten plagues was the plague of “dever” — cattle disease. The commentaries explain that although no cattle belonging to the Children of Israel died, there was one apparently Jewish person whose cattle did die. Who was this person? The son of Shlomis bas Divri. His cattle died because his father was an Egyptian taskmaster; he was therefore not one of the “Children of Israel,” such that his cattle would enjoy miraculous protection. Hence, by bearing a son from an Egyptian man, his mother caused her son to suffer from the plague of “dever.”

• Heard from Rabbi Sholem Fishbane

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Published by
OHR SOMAYACH
TANENBAUM COLLEGE
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • 02-581-0315

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Produced and Designed by the Office of Communications
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PRINTED IN ISRAEL AT OLD CITY PRESS 02-651-1529
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mally long eyebrows or had a white line extending from the white of the eye into the iris. All these were excluded from service.

If the service of G-d is a spiritual endeavor, why does the Torah exclude *kohanim* who were physically imperfect? The answer is that the service of G-d must not only be perfect, it must look perfect as well. Such is the nature of the human being, that what the eye sees, the heart feels.

HOLINESS CALLING

“These are the appointed festivals of G-d, the holy convocations, which you shall designate in their appropriate time” (23:1)

The above sentence is a perfect example of how translation fails to convey the beauty of the Torah, let alone its profound depth: “Appointed festivals,” “holy convocations.” What do these words mean?

The word in Hebrew which is usually translated in English as *festival* is *mo’ed*. The word *mo’ed* means “a meeting time.” The Jewish Festivals are times when we can meet with G-d. Quite literally. Every festival contains in it the primordial power of that first historical event, of that first meeting with the Divine, which we are celebrating. Take Pesach for example: Once a year we pass through the spiritual landscape of that day. Like a train returning to the same station on some vast circular time-track. When we do the specific *mitzvos* of that day properly, we jump aboard this spiritual train and we ride it for an entire year. The taste of matza lingers on the palate of our souls much longer than just one night. It stays part of us until we return to that same station, to that same meeting point with G-d.

The word “convocation” means liter-

ally to “call together.” In Hebrew however, the words *mikra’ei kodesh* can also mean “calls to holiness.” In other words, the Jewish Festivals are a call, they can draw a person to holiness like a magnet

ONE METER EXILE

“You shall dwell in booths” (23:42)

Why do we go out and live in a succah after Yom Kippur? On Rosh Hashana, G-d judges the world. On Yom Kippur, He seals the decree. The Midrash says that it’s possible that G-d has decreed that the Jewish People must go into exile. So we make ourselves a succah, “banishing” ourselves from our houses, and G-d considers this “exile” as though we had in reality been exiled.

This is a very strange idea. How can it be that by merely walking a few meters from our houses it is as though we had gone into exile? And such a pleasant exile at that!

Let’s answer one question with another. What makes people distant from each other? If there’s one thing that separates people, it’s acquisitiveness, the desire to take, to grab. The underlying mindset of acquisitiveness is that whatever you have depletes from what I have. In other words, you’re filling my space, you’re breathing my air, you’re crowding up my world. Everything you have means I have less.

When a person feels like this, the very existence of other people bothers him. This is what is called *sinas chinam* — baseless hatred. *Sinas chinam* brings exile to the Jewish People. Two thousand years ago, the Second *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed and we were exiled and dispersed all over the world

because of *sinas chinam*.

But the punishment for *sinas chinam* — exile — is also its cure. Exile causes a person to feel rootless and destabilized. Inevitably this negates his acquisitiveness. The feeling that others are depriving me of what is rightfully mine is replaced by a feeling of unity: “I may not have a lot, but what I have, you’re welcome to share.”

The punishment of exile cures the separation between people that is the manifestation of *sinas chinam*. The succah represents the nullification of material power and acquisitiveness, for however wealthy we may be, we are obliged to leave the realm of our wealth, our house and all its symbols of power and status — all the things that make us think that the world is ours — and dwell in a temporary dwelling. Now that we are destabilized, we feel how much we need G-d to protect us; that our own power is nothing. We dwell under the “shade of faith.” By living in a temporary dwelling, we sensitize ourselves to the very temporary nature of our dwelling in this world.

This process of living in the succah gives us the sense of vulnerability and instability which is the hallmark of exile. This feeling unifies the Jewish People and nullifies the selfishness that leads to *sinas chinam*, which was the reason for the verdict of exile in the first place. Remarkably, by moving just a few meters out of our homes, we have, in reality, experienced exile.

Sources:

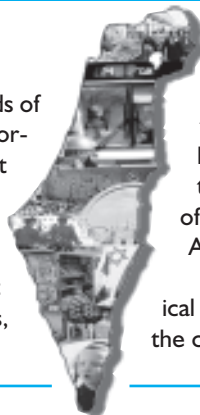
- Cosmetically Challenged** - Talmud Shavuos 32a, Ohr Yahil, Rabbi Mordechai Perlman
- Holiness Calling** - Michtav M’Eliyahu, Chidushei HaRim
- One Meter Exile** - Michtav M’Eliyahu, Yalkut Shimoni 651

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

MEGIDDO

Situated on the great highway connecting the lands of Egypt and Assyria, Megiddo was of strategic importance in Biblical times. King Solomon fortified it as a bulwark of defense (*Melachim I 9:15*). When the Egyptian king, Pharaoh Necho, marched his army towards war with a northern adversary, King Yoshia of Israel who went to battle against him at Megiddo was slain there, just as a predecessor of his,



King Achazayahu had fallen there.

The term “Armageddon” is derived from “*Har Mageddon* – the Mount of Megiddo.” When the British troops successfully invaded the north of Palestine through the Megiddo Pass in World War I to free it from Turkish rule, the commander-in-chief of the victorious forces was granted the title of Lord Allenby of Megiddo.

The site of ancient Megiddo is rich with archeological discoveries, but only a kibbutz bears the name of the city today.

WEEKLY DAF

SUCCAH 27 - 33

SUBSTITUTE SPECIES

On the first day of Succos we are commanded by the Torah to take the four species mentioned in Parshas Emor (*Vayikra* 23:40). The Sages decreed, after the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, that we take these species all seven days of Succos in order to have a reminder of the *Beis Hamikdash* where the four species were taken all seven days by Torah Law. They also instituted a blessing to be made before performing this mitzvah, just as they did for almost all *mitzvos*.

What happens when a Jew cannot get hold of all four species? Two sources in the *gemara* serve as the background for the discussion of the commentaries on this subject.

The four species are interdependent, says the *mishna* (*Menachos* 27a), meaning that one cannot fulfill the mitzvah if he lacks any one of them. Regarding using another species, our *gemara* here tells us that if one cannot get hold of an *esrog* he should not substitute a pomegranate or another fruit for the purpose of not forgetting the mitzvah, because there is the danger that people may become accustomed to using that invalid species even when a valid one is available.

How about using a *dried up* species when no other one is available? The *mishnayos* throughout this *perek* state clearly that every one of the species is disqualified for use if it is dried up. Rabbi Yehuda, however, contends that this is true only if a fresher one is available, and cites as proof the fact that there was a time when city-dwellers who did not live near palm trees would hand down their *lulavim* to their heirs, despite the fact that they were dried up. The other sages reject this proof by stating that you cannot bring a proof from an extraordinary situation.

There are different approaches to understanding this *gemara*, but we shall limit ourselves to that of Rabbi Avraham ben David (*Ra'avad*) whose view is the basis for the ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 651:12,13).

When the Sages told Rabbi Yehuda that he cannot bring proof from an extraordinary situation, they did not intend to convey that in such a situation one can fulfill the mitzvah even with a dried up *lulav*; rather, that in such circumstances one should take the dried up *lulav* in order not to forget that the mitzvah exists. Similarly, if one has a *lulav* but no *esrog*, he should take whatever species he does have as a way of remembering the mitzvah. In both cases he cannot say a *bracha*, because in truth he is not fulfilling the mitzvah.

But why do we encourage the taking of three species if the fourth one is unavailable, or the taking of a species that is invalid because of dryness? Why are we not concerned that this may lead people to do the same in other years even though all the species are available, just as we discourage the use of a substitute for the *esrog*? The answer is that since the Torah specifically lists four species, it is unlikely that anyone will use less than that number if they are all available; nor is it likely that anyone will use a dried up *lulav* when a fresh one is available. But regarding the *esrog*, which the Torah simply describes as a "beautiful fruit," there is the danger that if we allow a substitute pomegranate instead of the missing *esrog*, people may assume that this is indeed the "beautiful fruit" which the Torah speaks of, and they will use it in the future, even when an *esrog* is available.

• *Succah* 31a & b

A JUST KING AND UNJUSTIFIED MEANS

A stolen *lulav*, says the *mishna*, is invalid. Since no differentiation is made between the first day of Succos and the other days, when the mitzvah outside of the *Beis Hamikdash* is only of rabbinical origin, the assumption is that a stolen *lulav* is invalid even on those other days.

The disqualification on the first day is based on the term "for yourselves" which is interpreted as a requirement that on the first day the *lulav* be the property of the one using it and can neither be borrowed nor stolen. This raises the question as to why we disqualify a stolen *lulav* on the remaining days even though we do not disqualify a borrowed one.

The explanation offered by Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai is that it is a mitzvah object which came into his possession through a sin and is therefore not valid for fulfilling a mitzvah. "For I, Hashem, love justice and hate theft for the purpose of a sacrifice." (*Yeshayahu* 61:8) This prophetic passage is cited as a source for this concept of rejecting a mitzvah born of sin.

A parable is offered to sharpen the point: A king and his entourage passed by a station where a tax had to be paid to the royal treasury. When he instructed his servants to pay the tax, they wondered aloud why the king should pay a tax which went to his own treasury. "All my traveling subjects will learn from my example," he explained, "not to avoid paying the toll expected of them." In similar fashion Hashem says that He despises sacrifices offered from stolen animals, and that all of His children will learn from His example to avoid theft.

The comparison between the Divine King and the mortal one is that both are the ultimate owners of the resources involved. But how are the subjects of the mortal king going to draw a lesson from the king virtually taking money out of one pocket and putting it in the other, to become so moral that they are willing to pay a toll which will not return to them?

Perhaps the message of the parable is to dispel the rationalizations people use to avoid paying taxes or to indulge in other forms of dishonesty. A person can always find some lame excuse for justifying why the government doesn't deserve his tax money, or why it is proper for him to appropriate the resources of someone else. The king tried to explode this myth of rationalization by ordering his servants to pay the toll from his money even though no one had a better rationalization than he did as the ultimate beneficiary of that toll. "Dishonesty is dishonesty" is the message he wanted to bring home to his subjects, and no amount of rationalization would justify it.

What better rationalization could one have for stealing an animal than the fact that he was returning it to its ultimate Owner in the form of a sacrifice? Hashem therefore informs us that dishonesty is dishonesty, and the end does not justify the means. This is why a stolen *lulav* cannot be used to serve Hashem Who despises any theft committed for the purpose of serving Him.

• *Succah* 29b-30a

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a *kohen* have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a *kohen*?
4. How does the Torah restrict the *kohen gadol* with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who “approaches holy objects” while in a state of *tumah* (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by “approaches”?
6. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit *tumah*?
7. Who in the household of a *kohen* may eat *terumah*?
8. If the daughter of a *kohen* marries a “zar” she may no longer eat *terumah*. What is a *zar*?
9. What is the difference between a *neder* and a *nedavah*?
10. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
11. How does the Torah define “profaning” the Name of Hashem?
12. Apart from Shabbos, how many days are there during the year about which the Torah says that work is forbidden?
13. How big is an *omer*?
14. On what day do we begin to “count the *omer*”?
15. Why do we begin counting the *omer* at night?
16. How does the *omer* differ from other *minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is called a “*zichron teruah*” (sound of remembrance). For what is it a reminder?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the *esrog* tree?
19. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one’s parent?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 21:1 - *Challalim* — those disqualified from the priesthood because they are descended from a relationship forbidden to a *kohen*.
2. 21:3 - No, he is required to do so.
3. 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a *kohen* reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead the blessings before and after meals.
4. 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
5. 22:3 - Eats.
6. 22:5 - A piece the size of an olive.
7. 22:11 - He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters and his non-Jewish slaves.
8. 22:12 - A non-*kohen*.
9. 22:18 - A *neder* is an obligation upon a person; a *nedavah* is an obligation placed upon an object.
10. 22:28 - Yes. The Torah only prohibits slaughtering an animal and its mother on the same day.
11. 22:32 - Willfully transgressing the commandments.
12. 23:7-36 - Seven.
13. 23:10 - One tenth of an *eipha*.
14. 23:15 - On the 16th of Nissan.
15. 23:15 - The Torah requires counting seven complete weeks. If we begin counting in the daytime, the seven weeks would not be complete, because according to the Torah a day starts at nightfall.
16. 23:16 - It was made from barley.
17. 23:24 - The *akeidas* (binding of) Yitzchak.
18. 23:40 - It has the same taste as the fruit.
19. 24:10 - The Egyptian killed by Moshe (*Shemos* 2:12).
20. 24:21 - Death.

BONUS QUESTION

“And you shall count from the day after Pesach, from the day you bring the *omer* offering, seven complete weeks....” (23:15)

Starting the day after Pesach, Jews worldwide begin the mitzvah of “counting the *omer*,” counting the 49 days until the Festival of Shavuos. Why don’t we say a *shehechyanu* blessing when we begin this mitzvah, as we do when fulfilling other mitzvahs that come around once a year? For example, we say *shehechyanu* when we shake the *lulav* and read the Megillah.

continued on page eight

THOU SHALT LOVE

Faron Lebson from Randallstown, MD <lebson@gl.umbc.edu> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
In the Torah, why does G-d command us to love Him? I thought that love was a natural response that could not be demanded of someone?

Dear Faron Lebson,

When we speak of loving G-d, we are not referring to “falling in love” with G-d, as though love, like a pit, were something that you “fall into.” Genuine, lasting love comes from respect and appreciation.

That is why, on the whole, we understand this commandment to mean that we should *act* as though we love G-d. We should keep the commandments faithfully, and make personal sacrifices for G-d just as we would towards a child, spouse or parent whom we love.

On a deeper level, though, the Torah is revealing a secret here: Planted within each person is a hidden capacity to truly love G-d. Acting with love towards G-d cultivates this dormant emotion until it grows and shines forth.

The study of the Torah, with its breathtaking depth and beauty, is a prime way to cultivate this love.

Another way to awaken our love for G-d is to study science and nature. Consider, for example, the fact that your stomach is full of acids that are strong enough to dissolve ox leather, yet these very same acids don't melt through the soft flesh of your stomach! This is because the Creator provided you with a specially formulated mucous lining to protect against this. Becoming aware of countless such kindnesses will certainly nurture our innate feelings of thankfulness and love towards G-d.

MY PEGGY

John D. Stone <jstone@nsf.gov> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Someone tried to take our dog from

our locked and alarmed car in a supermarket parking lot. She escaped and valiantly searched for her home for a week. I was five minutes from getting her at the latest sighting. Before I could get there she was hit and killed by a car. I know my life was blessed greatly by having Peggy as a companion for 61 months. I feel so helpless now, not only that she is gone, but that her last week searching for me was filled with hardship — longing for me and her home, suffering 12 degree (F) nights, snow and rain. She was the epitome of unconditional love, and this has taught me a great deal. Please advise me what will happen to Peggy and will we be reunited eventually?

Dear John D. Stone,

Your sorrow is evident from your message. The Torah commands many laws of mercy and kindness towards animals to nurture this virtuous feeling of compassion. For example, you may not eat a meal before feeding your animal, as this is an act of neglect and cruelty. The Torah also teaches us to have gratitude towards animals

However, animals lack a *neshamah* (a certain level of soul) so they have no afterlife existence. At death their *ruach* (a lower level of soul) expires.

By the great lesson of sincerity which Peggy has taught you, I think she has fulfilled her purpose of creation, if only we could apply this virtue in our own lives toward our fellow humans.

Sources:

- Shemot 22:30 and Rashi
- Ecclesiastes 3:21

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

Email@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
If a Jew observes Torah Law, yet does not believe that there is a G-d or that the Torah is true, do his mitzvot have any value? For example, one born into an observant home who stays observant, but in his heart doesn't accept the Torah as valid.

This is an extreme example, obviously, but your answer may help me understand what my own mitzvot accomplish if I perform them without 100% faith in their necessity. Basically, is “going through the motions” without the inherent belief worth anything? Thank you.

Dear Email@Withheld,

In principle, the fulfillment of a mitzvah requires the belief in G-d, and that He wants us to do the action. The word “mitzvah,” commandment, implies a Commander. The real spiritual value of a mitzvah is when it is performed with this understanding. Still there are many reasons to “go through the motions” even though there may be less than 100% belief, and I will try to elaborate briefly as best as I can.

First of all, there are many, many levels of belief, and often even a very low level can produce a lot of benefit, and make mitzvah observance worth something.

Secondly, in terms of negative commandments, the “Thou shalt nots,” if he refrains even for the wrong reasons, still he is refraining and not bringing all kinds of negative consequences onto himself.

If there is a basic belief in G-d, just a lack of understanding of the necessity of the mitzvah, then performance with trust in G-d that it is the right thing is really performance on a high level. The very acceptance of *mitzvot* by the Jewish people at Sinai was with the condition “*na'aseh v'nishma*,” “we will do and we will understand,” meaning that we will do even *before* we understand.

True, a person should try to understand, and certainly an understanding of the background and fullness of the mitzvah will create a deepened satisfaction in mitzvah performance. This usually comes with increased Torah study. Lack of this understanding, however, does not take away from the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*.

A person in the state that you describe will either go one way or the other. Hopefully, the continued performance of the *mitzvot* will keep him in tune, like the parable of a watch which isn't keeping time: If the person keeps winding it then ultimately when he

brings it to a watchmaker there will be something to fix. But if he just lets it sit, it'll get rusty beyond repair.

MEMORIAL FLAMES

Baruch <Farblungrd@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi:

I understand why a person leads the congregation in prayer and studies Torah on his parent's yahrzeit (anniversary of death). This brings merit to the deceased by his or her descendant's continuing to do mitzvot in this world. My question is how, and if, lighting a candle accomplishes this goal? Thank you.

Dear Baruch,

The soul, or *neshamah*, of the departed derives joy from

the kindling of lights. This enjoyment brings the *neshamah* to a state of spiritual expansion. The *neshamah* itself is a portion of light drawn from the light of the intellect (*sechel*). In Proverbs, King Solomon refers to this when he writes, "Man's soul is G-d's candle."

Therefore every year on the anniversary of the passing of one's parent, or other relatives, one kindles a light, called the *yahrzeit* candle; for on this day, the *neshamah* has permission to travel about in the world. It comes and sees the light burning for it, and receives spiritual satisfaction from this.

Some authorities write that it's best to light the *yartzeit* candle in the synagogue. Perhaps this brings merit to the deceased by enhancing the honor and ambiance of the synagogue.

Sources:

- *Elef Hamagen, Sha'ar 3*, cited in "Mourning in Halacha" by Rabbi Chaim Binyamin Goldberg

PUBLIC DOMAIN
Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: Bowing and Martial Arts (Ohrnet Purim Issue):

There is a midrash that when the king's servants asked Mordechai why he didn't bow to Haman, when even his ancestor Yaakov bowed to Esav, Mordechai replied that he is descended from Binyamin the son of Yaakov who never bowed to anyone in his lifetime. It was in this merit that the *Beis Hamikdash* was chosen to be in the portion of Binyamin, where all the nations of the world would bow down to G-d, "so I too will bow to no one but G-d!" (*Targum Sheini to Megillas Esther 3:3*)

Incidentally, I know of a Jewish G-d fearing karate teacher (he's second-Dah-black belt in four different martial arts!) who for this reason forbids bowing in his classes and instead makes opponents shake hands before a fight! *Mi k'amcha Yisrael* - Who is like Your people Israel!

- *Dons Hool, Kollel Ponevez, Israel*

Dear Ohrnet:

Dear Ohrnet,

Thank you so much for your beautiful magazine! Since my brothers began to bring it home from *shul* on Friday nights, it has been one of the highlights of my Shabbos.

The parsha insights are so enjoyable — for me, they are a fresh look at the *parshios* I've learned so many times. Also, the letters from "Ask the Rabbi" that are printed, even if I know the answers, often contain new ideas that I hadn't previously thought of. "Sherlox Holmes," "The Other Side of the Story" and "Yiddle Riddle" enhance the conversation at our Shabbos table, too.

I hope you will continue publishing this wonderful publication for many years to come. Enclosed please find my check for \$100 as my token of gratitude.

Sincerely,
A Reader in Israel

Re: Covered Eyes (Ohrnet Ki Tisa):

One can also add (as was confirmed to me by my grandmother) that the ladies cover their eyes when lighting the Shabbat candles in order to concentrate better on the blessing, as men do with the "*shema*."

- *Samuel Cohen <SamuelC@ackerstein.co.il>*

Re: Candles in the Dark:

I wish to bring attention to a serious halachic problem that might occur when going to a hotel for Shabbos or Yom Tov. The problem being where to light candles. Hotels do not allow lighting in the room or at the table, but usually in a place where the candles are out of the way or in the hall. This practice is not in accordance with halacha (since these candles neither illuminate the Shabbos table nor any other darkened room) and any blessing made there is, unfortunately, in vain.

- *M. Schaeffer, Jerusalem <moshe@cheerful.com>*

Even when we judge them favorably, kids always seem to find their way into...

A LOT OF HOT WATER

It was Friday afternoon and the water was hot. It was Shaindle's turn for the shower. "Shaindle," said my wife to our nine year-old daughter, "please go easy on the hot water. Your father and I still both need to take showers."

The warning was in vain. Lukewarm describes my shower only charitably; my wife's shower, if the second law of thermodynamics be true, was worse.

From the lips outward, my wife and I tried to actualize the great principle of "judge favorably" that we've gleaned from Ohr Somayach's column "The Other Side of the Story." "Maybe I used too much water for the dishes," said my wife.

"Or maybe there's some other explanation," I said.

In our hearts, however, we agreed to one thing: Our budding adolescent was guilty of yet another act of gross self-centeredness.

That night the real culprit revealed himself, as a trickle of water appeared from the crack in the wall where the bathtub meets the tiles. (Aha! So that's why that mysterious crack had been developing for the last couple of months!) In the morning, that trickle became a whoosh of spurting water.

After Shabbos, the plumber replaced the rusty pipe which had been rotting away in our wall for who knows how long, and which was to blame for who knows how many instances of "inconsiderate behavior." Too bad it's not that easy to replace our rusty "heart pipes" so that we can learn to judge others — yes, even our children — favorably.

• Concept based on "The Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series

continued from page five

BONUS ANSWER

The omer was an offering brought on the day after Pesach in Temple times. We only say *shehechyanu* on a mitzvah which brings us joy. Counting the omer, on the other hand, reminds us of the pain that we are presently unable to bring the Temple offerings.

• Rashba, cited in Aruch Hashulchan 489:5

YIDDLE RIDDLE

My son is beginning to learn Hebrew, and he knows all the letters. But he makes mistakes with the vowels, and with knowing where the words begin and end.

For example, the other day he was reading from the Chumash, and he came across a phrase that he translated into English as "Who? Who? Who? Who? What?" What verse was he reading?

Answer next week...

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

21:6	RAMBAN Holiness	23:40	The Esrog	296	Purpose of Creation
22:32	Sanctifying G-d		SEFER HACHINUCH	306	Counting the Omer
23:17	Leavened Bread	291	Perfection of Creation	313	Yom Kippur
23:27	Judgment and Repentance	294	Divine Providence	324	The Lulav
				325	The Succah

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